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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CASE SYSTEM IN AFRICAN LATIN AS EVIDENCED IN INSCRIPTIONS*

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Abstract: Present paper intends to explore the process of the transformation of the case system as evidenced in the inscriptions of the Roman provinces Africa Proconsularis and Numidia. First the peculiarities of the transformation of the case system in African Latin in the pre-Christian and Christian periods will be analysed. Then the African distributional patterns of case system changes will be compared to those of other regions of the Empire selected for the survey including Spain, Gaul (including Germany), Italy, Illyricum, and the city of Rome. Finally, the results of the present analysis, especially those regarding the dialectological positioning of Roman Africa, will be compared with the results of the investigation of Gaeng 1992 regarding the later, Christian period.

Keywords: African Latin, case system, inscriptions, dialectology, Vulgar Latin

1. Introduction

Despite the renewed activity in the literature of the last few decades concerning the problem of African Latin,¹ the very process of the transformation of the case system in African Latin was discussed neither extensively nor comprehensively.² In this context almost exclusively Gaeng can be mentioned, who discussed the transformation of the case system of later Latin expansively, based on a selection of African Christian inscriptions published in *ILCV*.³ From this material he inferred a radical reduction of the five-case system of Classical

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¹ For a detailed critical review of which see Adams 2007, 259-270 and 516-576.

² Apart from some particularities, see Adamik 1987, Herman, 1966=1990 or Adams 2007, 563, 570-573. Other literature, such as the description of the syntax of the African Latin inscriptions by Poukens, 1912 is merely descriptive, with no relevance to dialectological investigations.

³ *ILCV* = Diehl, E.: *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres* 1-3. Berlin, 1925-1931.

Latin into a system with only one inflection in later African Latin.⁴ For the pre-Christian period, practically the same conclusion was drawn by Herman surveying the language of some African curse tablets from the 2nd and/or 3rd century A.D.⁵ It can be assumed that it is due to the results of these investigations that in his book on Vulgar Latin Herman indicated Roman Africa (together with parts of Italy and Hispania) as a representative for a system with only one i.e. no inflection.⁶

However, some considerations suggest that the disintegration and transformation of the case system in African Latin might have happened territorially unevenly, more slowly, and more gradually than so far assumed. This has effectively been proved as for the pre-Christian period or at least as for the language of the African curse tablets.⁷ The present paper intends to reconsider the process of the transformation of the case system as evidenced in the inscriptions of both the pre-Christian and the Christian era of the core area of Roman Africa (i.e. of the provinces Africa Proconsularis and Numidia) with the help of the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of the Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age.

First, it has to be emphasized that the results of my investigation on the case system of African Latin to be presented here are at best provisional and cannot be considered entirely conclusive, since the African Roman epigraphic material has not yet been processed completely in the framework of our project. To date, roughly one third of all relevant inscriptions have been entered in the LLDB Database from the provinces of Africa Proconsularis and Numidia. The work with material from Mauretania, the most western province of Latin Africa has just started and therefore this province was excluded from the present survey.

Still, I decided to start my analysis of the African data set as the number of digital data forms recording the changes of the African Latin case system has already reached a volume where a distributional analysis is appropriate.⁸ The results are this way comparable to the linguistic profiles of other regions of the Roman Empire.

In my paper first I will analyse the peculiarities of the transformation of the case system in African Latin in the pre-Christian and Christian (“early” and

⁴ First of all, see his six graphs displaying these processes according to the first three declensions and by distinguishing between singular and plural in Gaeng 1992, 116-117, 119, 122, 124 and 126.

⁵ Herman 1987=2006, 41.

⁶ Herman 2000, 58.

⁷ Cf. Adams 2013, 249-251 and Adamik 2017, 9-11.

⁸ Thanks to the intensive data recording work of our data collectors, particularly Tünde Vágási, Dóra Bohacsek, Natalia Gachallová, and Tomás Weissar.

“later”) periods. Then the African distributional patterns of case system changes will be compared to those of other regions of the Empire selected for the survey including Spain, Gaul (including Germany), Italy, Illyricum, and the city of Rome, again considering the two above-mentioned periods.⁹ Finally, the results of the present analysis, especially those regarding the dialectological positioning of Roman Africa, will be compared with the results of the investigation of Gaeng regarding the later, Christian period (since Gaeng did not consider pre-Christian inscriptions in his study).

2. Methodology

Before we go into the detailed analysis, the following features of methodology have to be highlighted. Throughout our analysis, the method of József Herman will be followed:¹⁰ we will analyse the distributional structures of nominal morphosyntactic ‘errors’ recorded from Latin inscriptions relevant to the changes of the inflectional system. We will consider all types of case confusions recorded in our material, with particular emphasis on the substantial confusions between the accusative and the ablative, between the genitive and the dative, and between the nominative and the accusative.¹¹ It is the merger of these cases from where the Vulgar Latin declension system with just two or three cases (depending on the region) emerged, replacing the traditional declension system of five cases.¹² Apart from these confusions, we will also consider the instances of the first-declension nominative plural ending *-as*, which might rather be the result of formal morphological confusion than of a more general

⁹ Spain corresponds with Hispania Citerior, Baetica and Lusitania, Gaul (including Germany) with Aquitania, Lugudunensis, Belgica, Narbonnensis, Alpes, Germania Inferior and Germania Superior, Italy with the 11 Augustean regions of Italy and Illyricum with Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Inferior, Pannonia Superior, Dalmatia, Dacia, Moesia Inferior and Moesia Superior.

¹⁰ For Herman’s methodology in general see Adamik 2012, 134-138, for the methodology as applied to the analysis of the case system see Adamik 2014, 644ff.

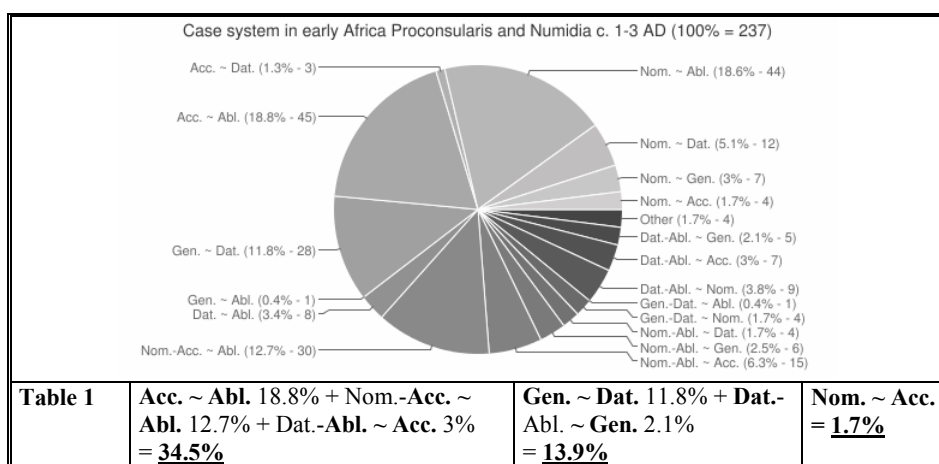
¹¹ However, we excluded those supposed confusions between the accusative and the ablative as for the *objective use* of the accusative (of the type *aram posuit*, *titulum fecit*, *aedem dedicavit* etc.) where by preferring the phonetic interpretation the morphosyntactic explanation seems to be less probable or even unlikely (in detail see Adamik Forthcoming). These cases are coded in the LLDB Database by code variants with the extension ‘in obiecto directo’ such as LLDB-14797: *-m > ø* / nom./abl. pro acc. in obiecto directo, ROGATVS () ARA POSVIT = *Rogatus () aram posuit* and LLDB-17619: dat./abl. pro acc. in obiecto directo / *-um > O*, TITVLO POIS = *titulum posuit* or LLDB-43608: abl. pro acc. in obiecto directo / *-m > ø*, HABVIT PATRE LA-OMEDONTE| = *habuit patrem Laomedontem*.

¹² Cf. Herman 2000, 49-61.

confusion between nominatives and accusatives.¹³ We will also discuss those few items of prepositional phrases replacing inflectional cases such as *de* + ablative used in the function of a genitive, or *ad* + accusative for the dative, if they were traceable at all.

3. Analysis of the African material

Now we turn to the analysis of the African material. The data recorded from early, i.e. pre-Christian Africa are sufficient (237 items = 100%) for drawing relevant linguistic conclusions. The distribution of the data can be charted as follows in the first section of Table 1 and in the respective footnote you will find the underlying data relevant to each section of the chart.¹⁴



From the distribution in the chart in Table 1¹⁵ we can conclude that in early Roman Africa, with 18.8% and 45 items, the most frequent phenomenon was

¹³ Cf. Herman 2000, 55. To make the most of the data recorded in the database, we have to take into consideration also those data forms that have twofold encoding (i.e. both a nominal morphosyntactical code and e.g. a phonological one, in whichever order), excluding those data forms with a parallel nominal morphosyntactic alternative code. This procedure is inevitable because such forms as *comiti* for *comitis*, *comite* for *comitem* and *vita* for *vitam* etc. can be interpreted not only as incidences of confusion between cases, but also as incidences of phonological changes, and these are not separable from each other. We also excluded data forms which might be regarded as correct and were therefore labelled as '*fortasse recte*' in the Database.

¹⁴ All the charts displayed in the study are prepared with the charting module of the Database and represent the status on 15/11/2018.

¹⁵ In this and the 21st footnote we indicate the case confusion type with its rate and total number, followed by the figures for each subtype of the respective confusion as coded in the

the confusion between the accusative and ablative cases. It occurs first of all in the singular of all declensions but with a prevalence of the 3rd declension and of the type PRO SALVTEM for *pro salute* (“for the safety”) or OB HONORE for

Database with an illustrative example and its serial number between brackets. Data types and figures which are underlined can be regarded as comparatively frequent (over 10%) and therefore characteristic of the transformation of the region in question. The items underlined by dashes have an incidence over the randomness of 3%, which means they still have a certain linguistic relevance. Nom. ~ Acc. 1.7% - 4 = 1 nom. pro acc. (LLDB-54964: PER FETVS | DECESSIT = *per fetum decessit*) + 3 acc. pro nom. (LLDB-60722: QVAM PER FETVS | DECESSIT = *quae per fetum decessit*); Nom. ~ Gen. 3% - 7 = 6 nom. pro gen. (LLDB-50926: MEMORIAE L FABI () OMNIBVS HONORIBVS FVNCTVS = *memoriae Lucii Fabi () omnibus honoribus functi*) + 1 gen. pro nom. (LLDB-46085: (/permixtio syntagmatum) M CORNELIVS FELICIS = *Marcus Cornelius Felix*); Nom. ~ Dat. 5.1% - 12 = 10 nom. pro dat. (LLDB-52396: (/s > ø). DI MANIBVS = *Dis Manibus*) + 2 dat. pro nom. (LLDB-57763: (/ dat. pro gen.). FONTEIA VERNALIS V = *Fonteia Vernalis vixit*); Nom. ~ Abl. 18.6% - 44 = 39 nom. pro abl. (LLDB-42945: (/s > ø) VIXIT ANNI LII = *vixit annis LII*) + 5 abl. pro nom. (LLDB-55990: (/litterae superfluae). LIVIA ZABIA VXSOIRE = *Livia Zaba uxor*); Acc. ~ Dat. 1.3% - 3 = acc. pro dat. (LLDB-38255: STATVAS AENEAS DVAS VICTORIAE AVGVSTAE ET FOR|TVNAM REDVCIS = *statuas aeneas duas Victoriae Augustae et Fortunae Reducis*); Acc. ~ Abl. 18.8% - 45 = 20 acc. pro abl. (LLDB-53906: (/ -ø > -m) PRO SALVTEM | DOMINI = *pro salute domini*) + 19 abl. pro acc. (LLDB-57803: (/m > ø) OB | HONORE AEDILITATIS = *ob honorem aedilitatis*) + 4 ablativus absolutus accusativus permixtus (LLDB-45926: CVRATORIB|VS SATVRVM ROGATV = *curatoribus Saturo Rogato*) + 2 accusativus absolutus pro ablativo absoluto (LLDB-44026: CVRANT|ES FILIOS | EIVS = *curantibus filiis eius*); Gen. ~ Dat. 11.8% - 28 = 12 gen. pro dat. (LLDB-51063: M AVRELIO SEVERO ALEXANDRO PIO FELI|CIS = *Marco Aurelio Severo Alexandro Pio Felici*) + 16 dat. pro gen. (LLDB-40069: (/ -s > ø) VXOR Q SILICI MARTIALI = *uxor Quinti Silici Martialis*); Gen. ~ Abl. 0.4% - 1 = 1 gen. pro abl. (LLDB-54706: (/ permixtio syntagmatum) VIXIT ANNIS | XXVII ET MEN|SVM VI = *vixit annis XXVII et mensibus VI*); Dat. ~ Abl. 3.4% - 8 = 6 dat. -ī > E (LLDB-71716: (/ i: > E), D M ET PERPETVE SE|CVRITATE = *D(is) M(anibus) et perpetuae securitati*) + 2 abl. -e > I (LLDB-51388: (/ e > I) FORTISSIMO | IMP ET PACA|TORI VRBIS () FELICE = *fortissimo imperatore et pacatore urbis () Felice*); Nom.-Acc. ~ Abl. 12.7% - 30 = 30 nom./acc. pro abl. (LLDB-43583: (/ dat./abl. pro acc.) VIXIT ANNIS | LX MENSIES TRES = *vixit annis LX mensibus tribus / annos LX menses tres*); Nom.-Abl. ~ Acc. 6.3% - 15 = 15 nom./abl. pro acc. (LLDB-52422: (/ -m > ø. OB MVNIFICENTIA EIVS = *ob munificentiam eius*); Nom.-Abl. ~ Gen. 2.5% - 6 = 6 nom./abl. pro gen. (LLDB-68293: (/ permixtio syntagmatum) [E]X AVCTORI[TATE] | () NERVA TRAIANI = *ex auctoritate () Nervae Traiani*); Nom.-Abl. ~ Dat. 1.7% - 4 = 4 nom./abl. pro dat. (LLDB-51444: (/ litterae omissae), MARITA MERENTI = *maritae merenti*); Gen.-Dat. ~ Nom. 1.7% - 4 = 4 gen./dat. pro nom. (LLDB-54034: (/ nom. pro gen.) D M S CECILIVS | COTTAE | P V = *Dis Manibus sacrum Caecilius Cotta / Caecili Cottae pius vixit*); Gen.-Dat. ~ Abl. 0.4% - 1 = 1 gen./dat. pro abl. (LLDB-65327: TRIBVNICI|AE POTESTA|TAE II = *tribunicia potestate II*); Dat.-Abl. ~ Nom. 3.8% - 9 = 8 dat./abl. pro nom. (LLDB-51377: (/ -us > O) M IVL|IO PHILIPPVS INVICTVS = *Marcus Iulius Philippus Invictus*); Dat.-Abl. ~ Acc. 3% - 7 = 7 dat./abl. pro acc. (LLDB-50612: INTER EIS = *inter eos*); Dat.-Abl. ~ Gen. 2.1% - 5 = 5 dat./abl. pro gen. (LLDB-37721: (/ permixtio syntagmatum) [PRO] SALVTE () AVRELI COMMODO = *pro salute () Aureli Commodi*); Other 1.7% - 4 = 4 commutatio vel permixtio casuum aliorum (LLDB-45802: AD | MISERABILE MO|RTIS V = *ad miserabilem mortem vixit*).

ob honorem (“on account of the honour”), where the loss of the final *-m* or its hypercorrect addition affected the confusion of the two cases, resulting in a merged accusative-ablative case.¹⁶ This case merger might have been extended to the plural and to all declensions as it is evidenced by the following accusative absolute construction in plural instead of the ablative absolute: CVRAN|TES FILIOS | EIVS for *curantibus filiis eius* (“his sons were in charge (of the erection)”, LLDB-44026, accusativus absolutus pro ablative absoluto). With 18.6% and 44 items next comes the confusion between the nominative and ablative cases (Nom. ~ Abl.) attested mostly in the plural of the 2nd declension of the type VI|XIT A|NI LII for *vixit annis LII* (“she/he lived for fifty-two years”, LLDB-42945, alternatively coded by *-s > ø*). With 12.7% and 30 items, the third most frequent phenomenon was the confusion between the nominative-accusative and the ablative, attested mostly in the plural of the 3rd declension of the type VIX|IT ANNIS | LX MENS|ES TRES for *vixit annis LX mensibus tribus* (“she/he lived for sixty years and three months”), alternatively coded as dat./abl. pro acc., since it can stand also for *annos LX menses tres* (LLDB-43583), thus representing the confusion of the dative-ablative and the accusative in the plural of the 2nd declension (i.e. *annis* for *annos*) at the same time.¹⁷ With 11.8% and 28 items and on the fourth place comes the confusion between the genitive and the dative in the singular of the 3rd declension, just like M AVRELIO SEVERO ALEXANDRO PIO FELI|CIS for *Marco Aurelio Severo Alexandro Pio Felici* (“To Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander, Pius, Felix”, LLDB-51063, gen. pro dat.) and VXOR Q SILICI MARTIA|LI for *uxor Quinti Silici Martialis* (“wife of Quintus Silicius Martialis”, LLDB-40069: dat. pro gen. and alternatively coded by *-s > ø*).

Phenomena with a frequency lower than 10% are less important if considered separately, but might gain some importance if they are discussed together in groups of related phenomena. Here I mean not so much the confusion between the nominative and the dative (with 5.1% and 12 items), with examples where most probably the contamination of concurrent phrases resulted in a case

¹⁶ E.g. LLDB-50672: acc. pro abl. / *-ø > -m*, EX A|REAM for *ex area*, LLDB-48354: acc. pro abl. / *-ø > -m*, IM MENTEM () MANEAT for *in mente () maneat*, LLDB-50625: acc. pro abl. / *-ø > -m*, PRO SOCRVM for *pro socru*, LLDB-46811: acc. pro abl. / *-ø > -m*, QVA REM for *qua re*.

¹⁷ Among the examples we also find occurrences after prepositions: LLDB-38217: nom./acc. pro abl., CVM () SACERDOTES for *cum () sacerdotibus*, LLDB-50706: nom./acc. pro abl., PRO PECORA for *pro pecoribus*, and two items in singular: LLDB-66279: nom./acc. pro abl., SINE CRIME|N for *sine crimine* and LLDB-54278: nom./acc. pro abl., VT PAVCIS | DISCAS CVM GENVS EXITIVM for *ut paucis discas cum genere exitium*, and one item in plural but without preposition: LLDB-50964: nom./acc. pro abl., FRVI|TVS ET TEMPORA SVMMA for *fruitus et temporibus summis*.

confusion like the one in the next item: ROMANVS CONIVGX | PISSIME SANCTISSIMAE for *Romanus coniugi piissimae sanctissimae* (“Romanus to her most dutiful wife”, LLDB-46794: permixtio syntagmatum / nom. pro dat.). (However, it should be mentioned that this case confusion type has also some interesting items such as DI MANIBVS for *Dis Manibus* (“To the gods below”, LLDB-52396: nom. pro dat. / -s > ø), relevant for the transformation of the case system and undoubtedly illustrating the weakening of the distinctive boundaries between the nominative and the dative-ablative in the plural of the second declension.¹⁸) Instead, here I mean the confusion of the dative-ablative and the accusative with 3% and 7 items, of which 3 are singulars of the 2nd declension such as APVT CARO | MARITO for *apud carum maritum* (“at her dear husband”, LLDB-46818: dat./abl. pro acc., alternatively coded as -um > O), one a plural of the 2nd declension, namely INTER EIS for *inter eos* (“among them”, LLDB-50612), one a plural of the 3rd declension, namely OB HO|NORIBVS for *ob honores* (“on account of the honours”, LLDB-58148 dat./abl. pro acc.) and 2 are plurals of the 2nd and 3rd declensions of the type [V]IXIT ANNIS | VI MESES DVO for *vixit annis VI mensibus duobus* or *annos VI menses duos* (“she/he lived for six years and two months”, LLDB-43644) that is coded as dat./abl. pro acc. and alternatively as nom./acc. pro abl. They can be lumped together with the items of confusion between the nominative-accusative and the ablative in the plural of the 3rd declension discussed above. This applies also to the confusion between the dative-ablative and the genitive with 2.1% and 5 items, of which 3 are singulars of the 2nd declension such as [PRO] SALVTE () AVRELI COMMODO for *pro salute () Aureli Commodi* (“For the safety of () Aurelius Commodus” LLDB-37721, dat./abl. pro gen. / permixtio syntagmatum), one a plural of the 2nd declension, namely PRO SALVTEM () AVG PII LIBERIS|QVE EIVS for *pro salutem () Augusti Pii liberorumque eius* (“For the safety of () Augustus Pius and his children”, LLDB-82075: dat./abl. pro gen. / permixtio syntagmatum), one a plural of the 3rd declension, namely CONDVC-TORIBVS V[ILI]CORV]MVE for *conductorum vilicorumve* (“of lessees and overseers”, LLDB-50687: dat./abl. pro gen. / permixtio syntagmatum). They can be lumped together with the items of confusion between the dative and the genitive in the singular of the 3rd declension discussed above. The other confusions with fewer than 6 instances i.e. under 3% are left out of consideration as more or less isolated and irrelevant phenomena.

¹⁸ With 6% and 15 items, worth mentioning is also the confusion between the nominative-ablative and the accusative singular of the 1st declension of the type POST FAB|IA FORTVNATA for *post Fabiam Fortunatam* (LLDB-71480: -m > ø / nom./abl. pro acc.).

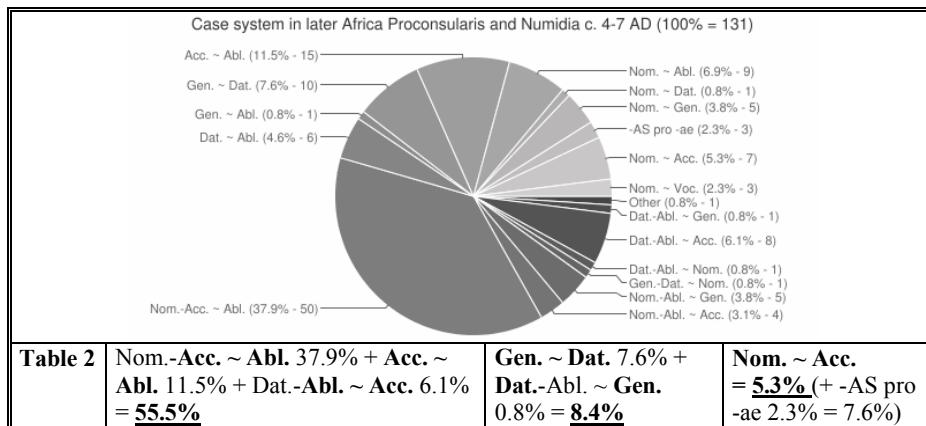
As it is displayed in the columns below the chart in Table 1, by adding up the figures for the various subtypes of the confusions referring to the same case merger of the accusative and the ablative, i.e. Acc. ~ Abl. 18.8% - 45 and Nom.-Acc. ~ Abl. 12.7% - 30 and Dat.-Abl. ~ Acc. 3% - 7, we get a sum of 34.5% and 82 items. This proves that the merger of the accusative and ablative cases evolving toward a merged accusative-ablative inflection was intensively in progress.¹⁹ As for the other significant case merger, i.e. that of the genitive and the dative with an accumulated rate of 13.9% and 33 items—i.e. by adding the 2.1% confusion between the dative-ablative and genitive (Dat.-Abl. ~ Gen. 2.1%) to the 11.8% confusion between genitive and dative—it can be stated that the process of the merger started perceptibly not only in the singular of the 3rd declension (Gen. ~ Dat. 11.8% - 28), but sporadically also in that of the 2nd declension and in the plural of the 3rd declension (Dat.-Abl. ~ Gen. 2.1% - 5). Concerning the third most important merger, i.e. that of the nominative and the accusative, it can be concluded that it was quite an isolated process represented rarely in the African material with 1.7% and 4 items only. Consequently, the distinctive boundaries between the nominative and the accusative were kept and were not permeable.²⁰ The separateness of the nominative was only endangered by the confusion with the ablative (Nom. ~ Abl. 18.6% - 44) in the plural of the 2nd declension.

Now if we turn to the situation experienced in the later, Christian period of Roman Africa, we get a picture quite different from that of the early period. The amount of data recorded from later Africa is obviously smaller than that of the early period, but still sufficient for drawing relevant linguistic conclusions (131 items = 100%). The distribution of the data can be charted as follows in the first section of Table 2.²¹

¹⁹ This merging process extended also to the singular nominative of the 1st declension (Nom.-Abl. ~ Acc. 6% - 15), thus here the original five case-system started to evolve into a two case-system (Nom.-Acc.-Abl. *cura* and Gen.-Dat. *curae*), see also the first graph in Gaeng 1992, 116.

²⁰ As for the alleged cases of confusion between nominative and accusative to be found in African curse tablets, those are actually accusatives used in lists instead of nominatives (coded as accusativus enumerationis pro nominativo in the database) and have nothing to do with the case merger of the nominative and the accusative, see Adamik 2017, 10-11.

²¹ Nom. ~ Voc. 2.3% - 3 = 3 voc. pro nom. (LLDB-52229: EVTICIANE | IN PACE | VIXIT = *Eutychianus in pace vixit*); Nom. ~ Acc. 5.3% - 7 = 5 nom. pro acc. (LLDB-68767: HEC MEMORIAM FECIT = *hanc memoriam fecit*) + 2 acc. pro nom. (LLDB-68769: VISSITE|NT FILIOS ET NEPOTES MEOS = *visitent filii et nepotes mei*); -AS pro -ae 2.3% - 3 = 3 nom. pl. -AS pro -ae (LLDB-42896: (/ acc. pro nom.) VNA ET BIS SENAS TVRRES CRESC EBANT IN ORDINE TOTAS = *una et bis senae turres crescebant in ordine totae*); Nom. ~ Gen. 3.8% - 5 = 4 nom. pro gen. (LLDB-53293: REGIS | ILDIRIX = *regis Childerici*) + 1 gen. pro nom. (LLDB-53140: (/ x > S / SS / CX) GILIVS SE|NIS FIDELIS = *Gilius senex fidelis*); Nom. ~ Dat. 0.8% - 1 = 1 dat. pro nom. (LLDB-48749: (/ -s > ø) HOSTRILD|I FIDELIS (|) VIXIT = *Hostrildis fili*



From the distributional scheme of the chart in Table 2 we can conclude that in later Roman Africa, with 37.9% and 50 items, the most frequent phenomenon was the confusion between the nominative-accusative and the ablative, attested nearly exclusively in the plural of the 3rd declension of the type VIXIT AN|NIS () MEN|SES = *vixit annis* () *mensibus* ("she/he lived for ... years and ...

delis () *vixit*); Nom. ~ Abl. 6.9% - 9 = 7 nom. pro abl. (LLDB-43623: (/ -s > ø /) VIX ANNI XLVI = *vixit annis XLVI*) + 2 abl. pro nom. (LLDB-51347: (/ -s > ø) CASTRENSSE DVLCIS = *Castrensis dulcis*); Acc. ~ Abl. 11.5% - 15 = 10 acc. pro abl. (LLDB-59514: NATVS | CASAS MAIORES = *natus Casis Maioribus*) + 5 abl. pro acc. (LLDB-43732: / -m > ø, PER INQVISITIONE AMACI = *per inquisitionem Amaci*); Gen. ~ Dat. 7.6% - 10 = 8 dat. pro gen. (LLDB-43553: (/ -s > ø) IN NOMINE PATRI ET = *In nomine patris et*) + 2 gen. pro dat. (LLDB-64824: NICOMACHO FLAVIANO AGENTIS | = *Nicomacho Flaviano agenti*); Gen. ~ Abl. 0.8% - 1 = 1 gen. pro abl. (LLDB-53530: (/ permixtio syntagmatum) VIXIT AN|NORVM LXXX = *vixit annis / annos*); Dat. ~ Abl. 4.6% - 6 = 1 dat. -ī > E (LLDB-67878: (/ i : > E) [I]NVICTO PIO | FELICE () PON|TIFICI = *invicto pio felici* () *pontifici*) + 5 abl. -e > I (LLDB-40080: (/ e > I) IN PACI = *in pace*); Nom.-Acc. ~ Abl. 37.9% - 50 = 50 nom./acc. pro abl. (LLDB-71855: (/ dat./abl. pro acc.) VIXIT AN|NIS () MEN|SES = *vixit annis* () *mensibus / annos* () *menses*); Nom.-Abl. ~ Acc. 3.1% - 4 = 4 nom./abl. pro acc. (LLDB-80258: (/ -m > ø), PER INSTANTIA DONATI = *per instantiam Donati*); Nom.-Abl. ~ Gen. 3.8% - 5 = 5 nom./abl. pro gen. (LLDB-51131: SVMMA BONITATIS ET INGENI | PVER = *summae bonitatis et ingenii puer*); Gen.-Dat. ~ Nom. 0.8% - 1 = 1 gen./dat. pro nom. (LLDB-49368: (/ permixtio syntagmatum) IVLIA FLO|RIANAE FIDE|LIS VIXIT = *Iulia Floriana fidelis vixit*); Dat.-Abl. ~ Nom. 0.8% - 1 = 1 dat./abl. pro nom. (LLDB-43775: (/ -s > ø) NON|[I]A FIDELI | VIXIT = *Nonia fidelis vixit*); Dat.-Abl. ~ Acc. 6.1% - 8 = 8 dat./abl. pro acc. (5 of the type as LLDB-45538: (/ nom./acc. pro abl.) VIXIT ANNIS | LXX MENSES | V = *vixit annis LXX mensibus V* / *vixit annos LXX menses V* + 2 of the type as LLDB-71921: (/ -um > Ø) PER SOLOMONEM () MAGISTRO = *per Solomonem* () *magistrum*) + 1 of the type as LLDB-80291: INTER QVIBVS = *inter quos*); Dat.-Abl. ~ Gen. 0.8% - 1 = 1 dat./abl. pro gen. (LLDB-43555: COR|PVS FAMVLO CHRI = *corpus famuli Christi*); Other 0.8% - 1 = commutatio vel permixtio casuum aliorum (LLDB-52749: [I]NVICTIS | [A]VGG[G] || BONO R P NATVM = *Invictis Augustis bono rei publicae natis*).

months”),²² alternatively coded as dat./abl. pro acc. since it can also stand for *vixit annos () menses* (LLDB-71855), representing the confusion of the dative-ablative and the accusative in the plural of the 2nd declension (i.e. *annis* for *annos*) at the same time. The second most frequent phenomenon with 11.5% and 15 items was the confusion between the accusative and the ablative, attested six times in the singular of the 3rd declension such as IN PA|CEM VIXI for *in pace vixit* (“she lived in peace”, LLDB-48531: acc. pro abl. / -ø > -m),²³ but we have 3 more examples in the plural of the 1st declension like NATVS | CASAS MAIORES for *natus Casis Maioribus* (“he was born in Casae Maiores”, LLDB-59514, acc. pro abl.).²⁴ On the third place with a 7.6% rate and 10 items follows the confusion between the genitive and the dative in the singular of the 3rd declension, occurring 8 times when a dative is used instead of a genitive (e.g. LLDB-43553: dat. pro gen. / -s > ø, IN NOMINE PATRI ET for *In nomine patris et*, “In the name of the Father and”) ²⁵ and 2 times for the re-

²² Apart from this main type we only have one further item in the plural of the 3rd declension (LLDB-59515: nom./acc. pro abl., NATVS | CASAS MAIORES = *natus Casis Maioribus*), one more in the neuter singular of the 2nd declension (LLDB-59320: nom./acc. pro abl., IN HOC | SIGNVM VINCIMVS = *in hoc signo vincimus*) and two items in the plural of the 4th declension (LLDB-43247: nom./acc. pro abl. / permixtio syntagmatum, DEP IDVS MAR = *deposita Idibus Martiis*, LLDB-42559: permixtio syntagmatum / nom./acc. pro abl., SVB D IDVS DECEMBRES = *die Iduum Decembrium / Idibus Decembribus*).

²³ Further examples are LLDB-43732: abl. pro acc. / -m > ø, PER INQVISITIONE AMACI = *per inquisitionem Amaci*, OB INSIGNIA MERITORVM ET LABORE | FIDEMQVE = *ob insignia meritorum et laborem fidemque*, LLDB-79818: acc. pro abl. / -ø > -m, PRO SA|LVTEM = *pro salute*, LLDB-79820: acc. pro abl. / -ø > -m, PRO SA|LVTEM SVAM = *pro salute sua* and LLDB-46030: acc. pro abl. / -ø > -m, SILICEM OMNE SANCTVARIVM STRAVIT = *silice omne sanctuarium stravit*.

²⁴ Further examples are LLDB-42898: acc. pro abl., SVB TERMAS = *sub thermis* and LLDB-42187: permixtio syntagmatum / acc. pro abl., DIE N[ONAS IAN]VARIAS = *Nonis Ianuariis*; and we have one item in the 4th declension: LLDB-72454: abl. pro acc. / -m > ø, POST CONSVLATV EIVS = *post consulatum eius*, and another in the 5th declension: LLDB-45740: -m > ø / abl. pro acc., VSQVE DIE MORTIS = *usque diem mortis*. We have three more examples for the complex confusion type after *vixit*: LLDB-43434: abl. pro acc. / acc. pro abl., VIX|IT () ANNO|S () MENSE | VNV DIES XVII = *vixit () annos () mensem unum dies / annis () mense uno diebus XVII* and LLDB-44955: acc. pro abl. / dat./abl. pro acc., VIXIT A|NNIS () X | MES X ORAS V = *vixit annos () X menses X horas V / annis () X mensibus X horis V* and LLDB-55662: acc. pro abl. / dat./abl. pro acc., VIXIT | ANNIS LX MEN|SIS DVOS = *vixit annis LX mensibus duobus / annos LX menses duos*. And we have one item in the plural of the 3rd declension, LLDB-68770: acc. pro abl., EROG|ATVM EST SVMPTOS MERCEDES = *erogatum est sumptus mercedibus*.

²⁵ Further examples are LLDB-64877: dat. pro gen. / -s > ø, PER | ORDINI SVI [ET] POPVL[I V]IROS = *per ordinis sui et populi viros*, LLDB-65030: dat. pro gen. / -s > ø, STEFANI S|ERBATORI = *Stephani servatoris*, LLDB-79912: -s > ø / dat. pro gen., FONTI MEMOR = *fontis memor*, LLDB-80070: -s > ø / dat. pro gen., CVM LAVDE NABORI | ANTE

versed case (LLDB-64824: gen. pro dat. NICOMACHO FLAVIANO AGENTIS | for *Nicomacho Flaviano agenti sc. tunc vicem praefectorum praetorio*, “To Nicomachus Flavianus, at that time deputy for the praetorian prefects”).²⁶ The fourth position in the scale of frequency is held by the confusion between the nominative and the ablative (Nom. ~ Abl.) with 6.9% and 9 items attested in the plural of the 2nd declension with 2 items of the type VIX ANNI XLVI for *vixit annis XLVI* (“(s)he lived for forty-six years”, LLDB-43623, alternatively coded by -s > ø) and in the singular of the 3rd declension again with 2 items like CASTRENSSE DVLCS for *Castrensis dulcis* (“dear Castrensis”, LLDB-51347 coded alternatively by -s > ø).²⁷ The fifth most frequent phenomenon with 6.1% and 8 items was the confusion of the dative-ablative and the accusative represented principally by the complex confusion type after *vixit* coded as dat./abl. pro acc. and alternatively by nom./acc. pro abl. with 5 items such as VIX|IT ANNIS | LXX MENSES | V for *vixit annis LXX mensibus V* or *vixit annos LXX menses V* (“(s)he lived for ... years and ... months”, LLDB-45538),²⁸ and by two cases of confusion in the singular of the 2nd declension such as PER SOLOMONEM (I) MAGISTRO for *per Solomonem (I) magistrum sc. militum* (“by means of Solomon ... the Master of the Soldiers”, LLDB-71921, alternatively coded by -um > O)²⁹ and by one case as for the relative pronoun *qui*: INTER

= *cum laude Naboris ante*, LLDB-80250: -s > ø / dat. pro gen., IN NOMINE PATRI ET = *in nomine Patris et*, LLDB-80255: -s > ø / dat. pro gen., ECLSE NICI|VENSI ISTIVS = *ecclesiae Nicivensis istius*, LLDB-80256: -s > ø / dat. pro gen., ISTIVS PLEBI PER = *istius plebis per*.

²⁶ Further example is LLDB-71897: gen. pro dat., CARITATIS PACIQUE DICATVS = *caritati pacique dicatus*.

²⁷ Further examples are LLDB-52985: nom. pro abl. / -s > ø, VIXIT ANNI | XXII = *vixit annis XXII*, LLDB-65036: nom. pro abl. / transmutatio litterarum, MEN|SE SEPTEM|BER = *mense Septembri*. Furthermore, we have one example for the singular of the 2nd declension: LLDB-81021: nom. pro abl., SVB DIE SESTVS = *sub die sexto*, two examples for the 4th declension: LLDB-45546: abl. pro nom. / -s > ø, REQVESIT S|PI|RITV S|TVS EIVS = *requiescit spiritus sanctus eius* and LLDB-72995: nom. pro abl. / litterae superfluae, CVIVS PR[OCONS]VLATVS = *cuius proconsulatu*, one for the 5th declension: LLDB-65003: nom. pro abl., DEF EST DIES V = *defuncta est die quinto* and another for the numeral *duo*: LLDB-81792: nom. pro abl., BIXIT (I) ANIS | DVO = *vixit (I) annis duobus*.

²⁸ Further examples are LLDB-32945: BICSIT ANNIS | TRIB MENSES SEX = *vixit annis tribus mensibus sex / vixit annos tres menses sex*, LLDB-45539: VIC|XIT (I) ANNIS LXX MEN|SES II [DIE]S II[] = *vixit (I) annis LXX mensibus II diebus II- / vixit annos LXX menses II dies II-*, LLDB-45548: VIXIT () AN|NIS LXXXVIII MENSE | VNV DIES XI = *vixit annis LXXXVIII mense uno diebus XI / vixit annos LXXXVIII mensem unum dies XI*, LLDB-50642: VIXIT A|NNIS OC|TO MENS|ES TRES | DIEBVS VIGINT|I VNV = *vixit annis octo mensibus tribus diebus unus et viginti / annos octo menses tres diebus unus et viginti*.

²⁹ One further example is LLDB-72455: dat./abl. pro acc. / -um > O, POST CONS[V]LA[T]O EIVS = *post consulatum eius* (after a shift from fourth to second declension has taken place, cf. LLDB-81025).

QVIBVS for *inter quos* (LLDB-80291: dat./abl. pro acc.). With 5.3% and 7 items next comes the confusion between the nominative and the accusative attested not only in the singular of the 1st declension and of the 3rd declension such as in HEC MEMORIAM FECIT for *hanc memoriam fecit* (“(who) had this memorial made” LLDB-68767: nom. pro acc.) and HEC MVNITIO () | FECIT = *hanc munitionem () fecit* (“he had the fortification made” LLDB-72808: nom. pro acc.),³⁰ but sporadically also in the plural, e.g. in the 2nd declension such as VISSITE|NT FILOS ET NEPOTES MEOS for *visitent filii et nepotes mei* (“May my sons and grandsons visit it”, LLDB-68769, acc. pro nom.).³¹ The figure for the confusion in the plural of the 1st declension can be increased by the instances of the first-declension nominative plural ending *-as* instead of *-ae* (e.g. VNA ET BIS SENAS TVRRES CRESCEBANT IN ORDINE TOTAS for *una et bis senae turres crescebant in ordine totae*, “twelve and one towers altogether rose up in a row”, LLDB-42896 coded alternatively by acc. pro nom.); however, Herman regarded them as the results of formal morphological confusion rather than a more general confusion between nominatives and accusatives.³²

Although a little less frequent, still worth mentioning are the following phenomena under 5% but over 3%: with 4.6% and 6 items the confusion between the dative and ablative of the singular of the 3rd declension of the type IN PACI for *in pace* (“in peace”, LLDB-40080 coded as abl. *-e* > I and alternatively by *e* > I),³³ and with 1 example for the reversed case as [I]NVICTO PIO | FELICE () PON|TIFICI for *invicto pio felici () pontifici* (“to emperor ... unconquered, Pius, Felix ... chief priest”, LLDB-67878 coded as dat. *-ī* > E and alternatively by *i*: > E). There is a tie in the next position with 3.8% and 5 items: a) the confusion between the nominative-ablative and the genitive in the singular of the 1st declension like SVMMA BONITATIS ET INGENI | PVER for *summae bonitatis et ingenii puer* (“child of highest goodness and talent”, LLDB-51131,

³⁰ Further examples are LLDB-68772: nom. pro acc., HEC MEMORI|AM FECERV|NT = *hanc memoriam fecerunt* and LLDB-42897: acc. pro nom. / nom./abl. pro acc., MIRABILEM OPERAM CITO CONSTRVCTA VIDETVR = *mirabilis opera cito constructa videtur* / *mirabilem operam cito constructam videtur*, LLDB-73222: nom. pro acc., HEC () | FECIT = *hanc () fecit*.

³¹ The other example is attested in the plural of the 1st declension: LLDB-65346: nom. pro acc. / nom. pro abl., BIC|SIT ANIS () D|IES () ORE = *vixit annos () dies () horas / annis () diebus () horis*.

³² Cf. Herman 2000, 55.

³³ Further examples are LLDB-40996: abl. *-e* > I / *e* > I, IN PACI | = *in pace*, LLDB-55474: *e* > I / abl. *-e* > I, IN] PACI = *in pace*, LLDB-45882: abl. *-e* > I / *e* > I, SVB () GENAZIO ET IOANNI = *sub () Gennadio et Ioanne*, LLDB-64895: abl. *-e* > I / *e* > I, IVSTITIA ET INTEGRITATI () AC BENIGNI|TATE = *iustitia et integritate () ac benignitate*.

coded by nom./abl. pro gen.),³⁴ and b) the confusion between the nominative and the genitive in the singular in the singular of the 2nd and 3rd declensions like RELICVIE | SCS MAR|TIRIS for *reliquiae sancti martyris* (“relics of the saint martyr” LLDB-49271: nom. pro gen.,) and GILIVS SE|NIS FIDELIS IN | PACE for *Gilius senex fidelis in pace* (“the old and faithful Gilius in peace”, LLDB-53140: gen. pro nom. / x > S / SS / CX).³⁵ Finally, still worth mentioning is the confusion between the nominative-ablative and the accusative singular of the 1st declension of the type PER INSTANTIA DONATI for *per instantiam Donati* (“by insistence of Donatus”, LLDB-80258: coded by nom./abl. pro acc. and alternatively by -m > ø) with 3.1% and 4 items. The other confusions with fewer than 4 instances i.e. under 3% are left out of the discussion as more or less isolated and irrelevant phenomena.

As displayed in the column below the chart in Table 2, if we add up the figures for the various subtypes of the confusions referring to the case merger of the accusative and the ablative, i.e. Nom.-Acc. ~ Abl. 37.9% - 50, Acc. ~ Abl. 11.5% - 15 and Dat.-Abl. ~ Acc. 6.1% - 8, we get a sum of 55.5% and 73 items, which proves that the merger of the accusative and the ablative became 21% more frequent in the later period of Roman Africa compared to the 34.5% rate of the early period, and that the establishment of a merged accusative-ablative inflection went further. As for the other significant case merger, i.e. that of the genitive and the dative, we can observe that represented by only 8.4% (adding the 0.8% of the confusions between the dative-ablative and genitive to the 7.6% of those between the genitive and dative) it was forced back in the later period by 5.5% compared to the 13.9% accumulated rate of the early, pre-Christian period. This means that the process of establishing a separate genitive-dative case seems to be slowed down here. At the same time, the distinctive boundaries between nominative and accusative that were kept and were not permeable in the early period (1.7%) now started to weaken if we consider the 5.3% rate of the relevant confusions, which can be increased up to 7.6% if add the 2.3% of the instances of the first-declension nominative plural ending *-as* instead of *-ae*. In short, the distributional scheme of the chart of later Africa is simpler and more settled than that of early Africa. The very high, 55.5% ac-

³⁴ Further examples are LLDB-37891: nom./abl. pro gen. / litterae omissae, BONAE MEMORIA = *bonae memoriae*, LLDB-65329: nom./abl. pro gen. / litterae omissae, FILIAIS MEA = *filiae meae*, LLDB-65332: nom./abl. pro gen., FILIAIS MEA FL|ABANA = *filiae meae Flaviana* and LLDB-71985: nom./abl. pro gen. / litterae omissae, SPIRITVS ATHICA = *spiritus Athicae*.

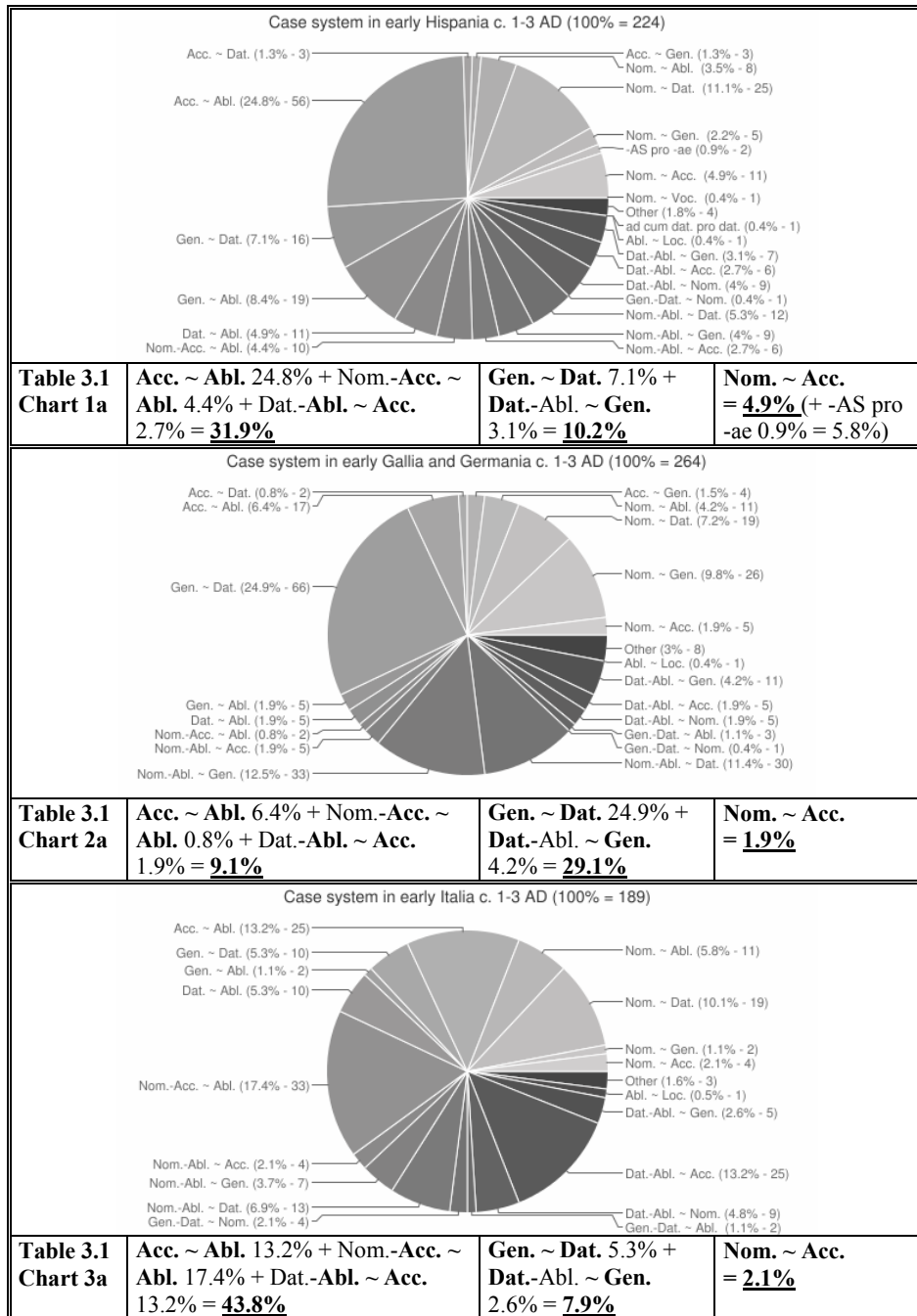
³⁵ Further examples are LLDB-53293: nom. pro gen., REGIS | ILDIRIX = *regis Childerici*, LLDB-64754: nom. pro gen., SVB DIE VI M DEKEMBER = *die VI mensis Decembris* and LLDB-72184: nom. pro gen., MESA S|ISATIV || = *mensa Sisatii*.

cumulated rate of the confusions referring to the case merger of the accusative and ablative may indicate that here in the Christian era the establishment of a merged accusative-ablative case can be evidenced with great probability, while other case mergers may or may not have been in progress.

4. Africa's comparison with the other regions of the Empire

After the description of the peculiarities of the changes of the case system in both periods of Roman Africa, now let us turn to the comparison with the other regions of the Empire selected for survey. We will systematically examine and compare territorial and chronological differences as for the substantial confusions between the accusative and the ablative, between the genitive and the dative, and between the nominative and the accusative. First, we discuss the early period of the selected regions as for the issue in question according to the charts 1a-6a of the Table 3.1.

The first impression might be that in all regions the confusion between the accusative and the ablative prevails with the sharp exception of Gaul and Germany (Chart 2a in Table 3.1), where, conversely, the confusion between the genitive and the dative predominated with 29.1% over that of the accusative and ablative with 9.1%. The second observation might be that early Africa obviously belonged to the regions where the merger of the accusative and the ablative definitely prevailed, while the merger of the genitive and the dative was also remarkably present, whereas the nominative and accusative cases were kept separate.



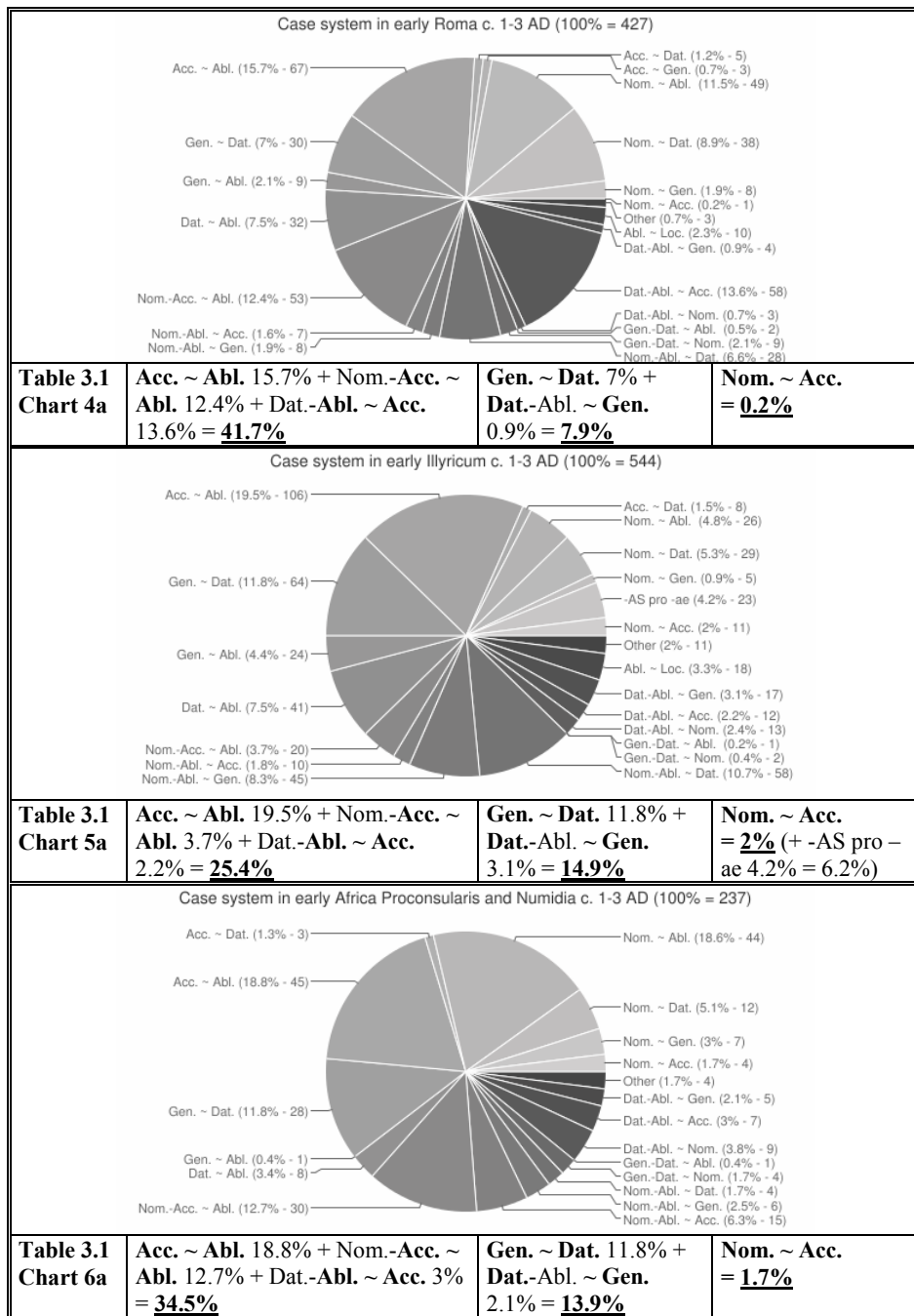
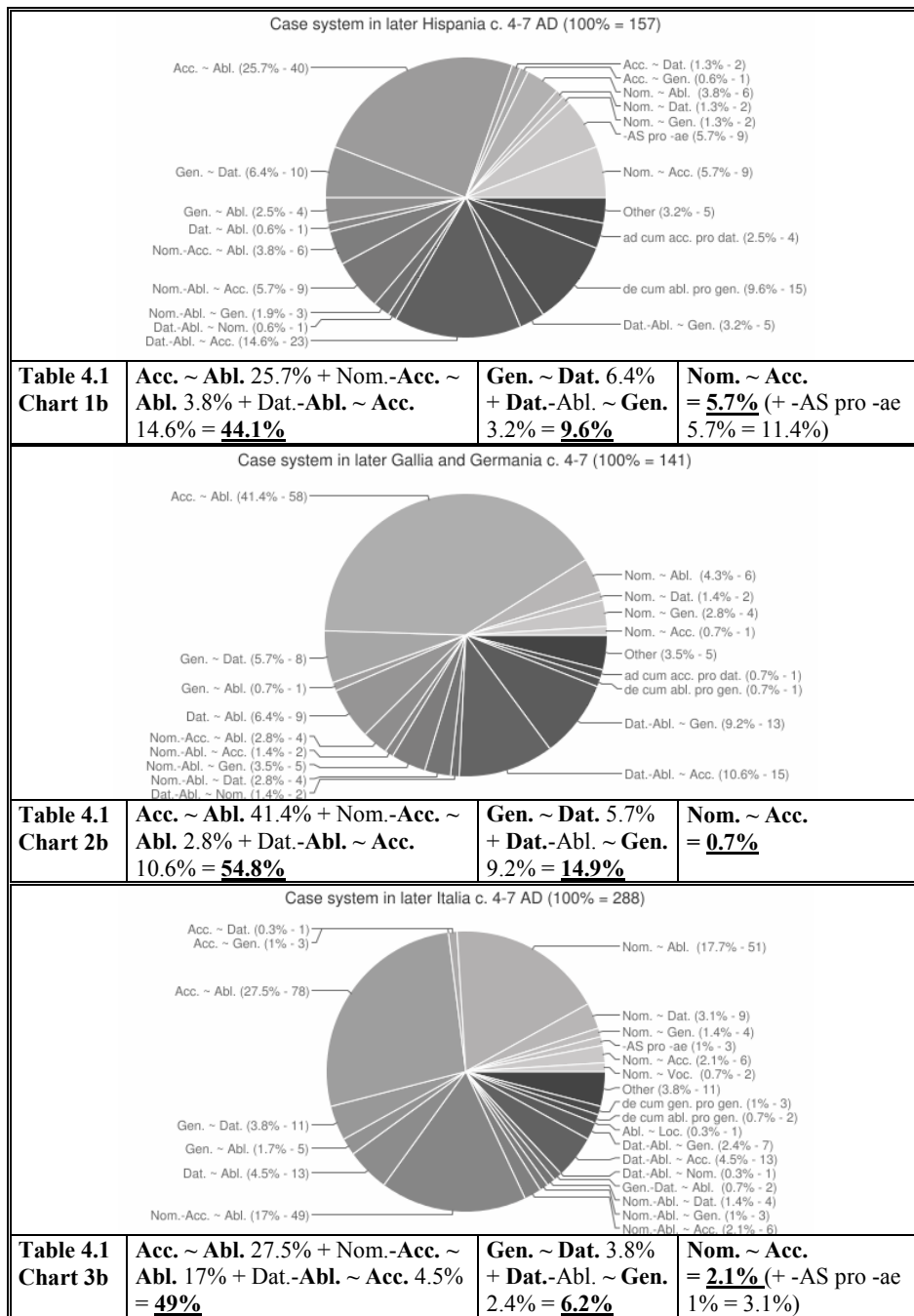


Table 3.2 c. 1-3 AD	Hispania	Gallia & Germania	Italia	Roma	Illyricum	Africa
Proportion of Acc.~Abl. and Gen.~Dat.	31.9% / 10.2% = 3.1	(9.1% / 29.1% = 0.3)	43.8% / 7.9% = 5.5	41.7% / 7.9% = 5.3	25.4% / 14.9% = 1.7	34.5% / 13.9% = 2.5
Rate of Nom.~Acc.	4.9% (5.8%)	1.9%	2.1%	0.2%	2% (6.2%)	1.7%

If we compare the rates of accusative and ablative confusions and those of genitive and dative confusions (cf. Table 3.2), with the more than twofold proportion ($34.5/13.9 = 2.5$) early Africa seems to be rather on the side of early Hispania of threefold proportion ($31.9/10.2 = 3.1$) or of early Illyricum of nearly twofold proportion ($25.4/14.9 = 1.7$), where the merger of the genitive and the dative apparently was able to keep up with that of the accusative and the ablative—and not on the side of Italy of nearly sixfold proportion ($43.8/7.9 = 5.5$) or Rome of more than fivefold proportion ($41.7/7.9 = 5.3$) i.e. where the merger of the genitive and the dative did not become established and remained somehow isolated in the shadow of the merger of the accusative and the ablative. Early Africa is, however, slightly different from early Hispania and Illyricum (cf. the second line of Table 3.2.), as in Africa the nominative and the accusative were kept clearly separate (with 1.7% confusion), while in Hispania (with 4.9% or 5.8% resp. if endings -AS pro -ae included) and Illyricum (with 2% or 6.2% resp. if endings -AS pro -ae included) the distinctive boundaries between the nominative and the accusative might have become slightly permeable.

If we turn to the later period of the same regions, we can draw the following conclusions based on the Charts 1b-6b in the Table 4.1. First, in nearly all regions the confusion between the accusative and the ablative prevails and again with a sharp exception, but this time of later Illyricum represented principally by Dalmatia and Moesia (Chart 5b in table 4.1), where now the confusion between the genitive and the dative predominated (with 41.2%) over that of the accusative and ablative (with 28.9%). Secondly, later Africa seems to have belonged to those regions where the merger of the accusative and the ablative prevailed even more definitely than in the early period, while the merger of the genitive and the dative was slightly or remarkably forced back compared with the early period, whereas the merger of the nominative and the accusative perceptively started.



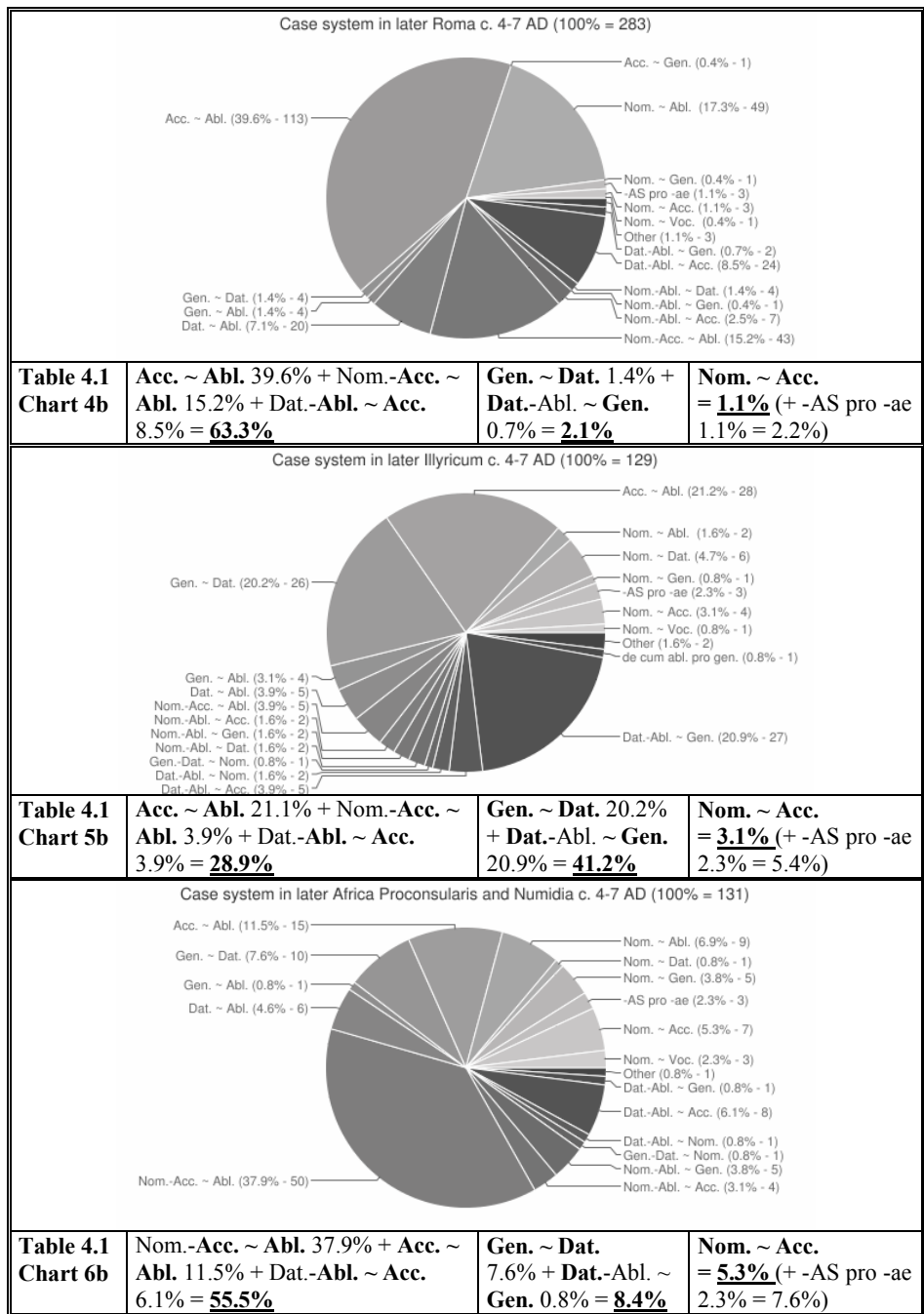


Table 4.2 c. 4-7 AD	Hispania	Gallia & Germania	Italia	Roma	Illyricum	Africa
Proportion of Acc.~Abl. and Gen.~Dat.	41.1% / 9.6% = 4.3	54.8% / 14.9% = 3.7	49% / 6.2% = 7.9	63.3% / 2.1% = 30.1	(28.9% / 41.2% = 0.7)	55.5% / 8.4% = 6.6
Rate of Nom.~Acc.	5.7% (11.4%)	0.7%	2.1% (3.1%)	1.1% (2.2%)	3.1% (5.4%)	5.3% (7.6%)
<i>de</i> + abl.(/gen.) pro gen. & <i>ad</i> + acc pro dat.	15 & 4	1 & 1	5 & 0	0 & 0	1 & 0	0 & 0

If we again compare the rates of the accusative and ablative confusions and that of the genitive and dative confusions (cf. Table 4.2), later Africa with its nearly sevenfold proportion ($55.5/8.4 = 6.6$) seems to stand closer to later Hispania and its more than quadruple proportion ($41.1/9.6 = 4.3$) or later Italia with its nearly eightfold proportion ($49/6.2 = 7.9$) than to later Rome with its more than thirtyfold proportion ($63.3/2.1 = 30.1$) where the merger of genitive and dative started to break off, or to later Gallia and Germania and their nearly quadruple proportion ($54.8/14.9 = 3.7$) where, contrarily, the merger of genitive and dative could have endured despite the pressure of the prevalence of the intensive merger of the accusative and the ablative. Furthermore, later Africa can be tied dialectologically even more to later Hispania with regard to the very similar 5.3% and 5.7% (or 11.4% and 7.6% resp. if endings -AS pro -ae included) level for the merger of the nominative and the accusative (cf. the second line of table 4.2), and at the same time detached from later Italia with its 2.1% (or 3.1% resp. if endings -AS pro -ae included) rate for this merger, and even more detached from later Gaul and Germany or later Rome where this merger was almost absent (0.7% and 1.1% resp.). Even if later Africa seemed to go on along with later Hispania in this issue for a while, in its latest phase, i.e. in the 7th century, Africa somehow fell behind the Iberian Peninsula, since in later Africa we do not see the use of prepositional phrases instead of inflections without prepositions such as *de* plus ablative in the function of a genitive nor *ad* plus accusative for the dative³⁶ (cf. the third line of table 4.2) while both constructions that

³⁶ Also, Gaeng 1992 was not able to find any examples for such prepositional constructions replacing inflections in the relevant material of *ILCV*. Such a shortcoming cannot be explained by the (to date) low processing level of the African material in LLDB. Instead, it might be explained either by the differences in the survival of epigraphic corpora in Hispania and Africa of the 7th century, and/or by potential linguistic differences between the two regions (i.e. the almost last wave of the disintegration of the case system displacing the genitive and dative by prepositional phrases did not reach post-Roman Africa, which was already detached and isolated from the Latin language area due to the Arabic invasions).

had a decisive role in the final disintegration of the case system are relatively often attested in Hispania in the Visigoth slate tablets of the 7th century.³⁷

5. Conclusions

To sum up, we think we are entitled to draw the following provisional conclusions on the dialectological position of Roman Africa as for the transformation of the case system within the vast Latin language area of the Roman Empire. By “provisional” I mean that our preliminary results may later be modified with the processing of the African material in the Database, not only by entering all possible material for Africa Proconsularis and Numidia, but also by expanding the data-collection to the third African province, Mauretania, which might have served as a link between Hispania and the core area of Roman Africa. Concerning the changes of the case system as evidenced in inscriptions, we can state that dialectologically Africa and Hispania could have been closely related. This dialectological affinity of Africa and Hispania that was emerging already in the early Empire, i.e. in the first three centuries A.D., could have even increased and intensified in the later Empire, i.e. in the Christian era from the fourth century A.D. on and approximately up to the end of the 6th century. Later, however, these affiliations could not evolve further, perhaps because Africa became more and more detached and isolated from the Latin language area due to the Arabic invasions in the 7th century, crashing its Latinity and hindering the potential birth of a Romance language there.³⁸

The positioning of Africa alongside Hispania³⁹ as for the transformation of the case system is much more tenable than the conclusion of Gaeng, who tried to connect Africa with Sardinia in this respect but without sufficient justification, based on some similar peculiarities of the vocalism of later Sardinian and African Latin inscriptions. These similar patterns, however, are all conservative

³⁷ The *de* plus ablative construction in the function of a genitive can be found 15 times in the Visigothic slate tablets of Lusitania, e.g. LLDB-47046: *de + abl. pro gen.*, VINDO PORTIONE| DE TERRA = *vendo portionem terrae* (“I sell a piece of land”), and the *ad* plus accusative construction in the function of a dative four times, e.g. LLDB-60035: *ad + acc. pro dat.*, AD EVM DICENS = *ei dicens* (“telling to him”).

³⁸ Cf. Schmitt 2003, 673. Cf. also Alföldy 1988, 21: „Doch starb hier [i.e. in the Danubian provinces B.A:] Roms Erbe nicht so wie in Nordafrika, wo der prachtvolle Glanz der römischen Zivilisation die niederen Schichten der berberischen Landbevölkerung stets unberührt ließ und wo dann die Ausbreitung des Islams so gut wie jede Kontinuität abgeschnitten hat.”

³⁹ A possible linguistic (phonological) connection between Africa and Hispania was already suggested, although without any proper justification, by Wartburg, 1950: 63: „Das Latein Afrikas näherte sich wohl dem Iberiens; aber in Ermangelung moderner romanischer Idiome geben die Zeugnisse zu wenig Aufschluss, um es in eine strenge Klassifikation auf lautlicher Grundlage einzureihen.”

peculiarities of the African and Sardinian vocalism, meaning they provide only negative evidence, which cannot be accepted as conclusive.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is characteristic of the general dialectological patterns of the Latin language area that different dialectological patterns can be peculiar to different linguistic subsystems of the same corpus in the same region of a certain period, thus patterns of one single special subsystem (e.g. of vocalism) cannot be assigned and projected automatically to another linguistic subsystem (e.g. to the case system) of the same corpus.⁴¹

Another conclusion as for the speed of the disintegration and transformation of the case system in African Latin is not so definite as the former one on the position of Africa. As mentioned above, Gaeng inferred a radical reduction of the five-case system of Classical Latin into a system with only one inflection in later African Latin. In his study, however, Gaeng did not do a real investigation of frequency. Instead, he practically quoted examples for each phenomenon, and, since he was able to find examples for nearly all phenomena of transformation in his corpus, he concluded that all changes took place equally in the language of the area and a system with only one i.e. no inflection became established in later African Latin.⁴² However, if we look at the charts displaying relative frequencies of the phenomena discussed here, it must be clear that those characteristic distributional patterns of changes of the case system in later African Latin permit assuming the existence of a two-case system at the longest, where a nominative was opposed to a merged accusative-ablative that was presumably going to absorb the genitive and dative just like in Gaul (and Germany).⁴³ At the same time, contrary to Gaul where later on the system with only two cases were kept even in Old French and Old Occitan, in Africa, just like in

⁴⁰ Gaeng 1992, 128-129. We cannot call his other argument (Gaeng 1992, 128) for the Sardinian relationship decisive either. Gaeng argues that as for the variation *vixit annis* / *annos*, the former one (*annis*) was preferable in African and in Sardinian inscriptions, while the latter one (*annos*) in the Iberian ones. While this might be true for the three regions as for the variation *annis* vs. *annos* (Africa: 5684 annis vs. 1177 *annos*, Sardinia: 202 annis vs. 55 *annos*, Hispania: 185 *annis* vs. 314 annos), it does not stand for the variation of *mensibus* vs. *menses* (Africa: 133 *mensibus* vs. 262 menses, Sardinia: 5 *mensibus* vs. 10 menses, Hispania: 20 *mensibus* vs. 33 menses) nor the variation of *diebus* vs. *dies* (Africa: 174 *diebus* vs. 261 dies, Sardinia: 12 *diebus* vs. 19 dies, Hispania 31 *diebus* vs. 40 dies) in the same phrase; data according to the EDCS = Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss, Slaby (<http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/>) by searching for exact occurrences, i.e. without abbreviations. For the confusion between ablative and accusative in time expressions after *vixit* etc. cf. Suárez Martínez, 1994.

⁴¹ Cf. Herman 1985=1990, 86.

⁴² Here Gaeng was at a disadvantage since he did not publish a detailed statistical analysis of the changes of the case system for Roman Africa as he did it for Gaul, Spain and Italy (Gaeng 1977) and for Dalmatia and the Danubian and Balkan provinces (Gaeng 1984).

⁴³ Cf. Adamik 2014.

Hispania, the distinctive boundaries between nominative and accusative were perceptively tending to weaken, which means the road might have been already paved to the final crash of the case system. These features of the later African case system are displayed in Table 5b, which I created by modifying a table from a previous study of mine from 2014 on the changes of the case system: Table 1, “Different regions of the Vulgar Latin declension system”.

Vulgar Latin Case-system	nominative	accusative-ablative	dative-genitive
1. Gaul (Old French, Old Occitan)			
2. Balkans (Rumanian)			
3. Hispania, Italia (modern Romance)			
4. Africa (no Romance)			

Table 5: Different regions of the Vulgar Latin declension system

In short, the findings of this investigation were hopefully able to expose a potential preform of a system with only one i.e. no inflection in the Latin of Africa, which, however, did not have a chance to evolve entirely, since, as opposed to Spain, here no Romance language evolved due to the known historical and sociolinguistic circumstances.

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